

The Place of Advertising in the Activities of the Agricultural Department.

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Introduction. Criticisms on the usefulness of the Agricultural Department are frequently heard sometimes from the educated men of our Province often due to unfounded notions or lack of adequate information on the various activities carried on by the Department. These criticisms are properly answered when they reach the ears of the departmental officers and the critics are almost invariably converted on being furnished with sufficient information. However, there is the danger of such unfounded criticisms passing on from person to person and thus acting as a potential source of prejudice against departmental activities. To avoid the spread of such an evil germ which, if not checked at the proper time may gain undue momentum, adequate measures have to be taken, and the Department has to pay special attention to the dissemination of sufficient information to the public. At present the Department is holding exhibitions and lectures and distributing leaflets and pamphlets and issuing press notes. While they educate the public on agricultural improvements, they also serve to correct these wrong opinions and to create a more favourable public opinion. But one has to seriously consider whether these comprise the maximum effort that the Department could put forth and whether the Department cannot do anything more. In the following pages the scope of proper advertising in all its aspects as a remedy for this evil is indicated.

What is to be Advertised ? With the Department is available not only some commodities such as seeds, implements, books and publications, but also a lot of service information in respect of agricultural practices. It appears reasonable to classify such services and commodities to be advertised into the following groups :—

1. *Policy and Programme of the Department.* In this group can be included the information contained in the administration report of the Department issued every year. The information is in respect of investigations in progress with the Department on its research branch, and also a resume of the work carried out by the propaganda wing. The progress achieved during a given year in various fields of research and propaganda as compared with similar progress during the previous year is also included. At present these particulars are contained in the publication entitled *Report on the Operations of the Department of Agriculture* which is available to the public and is priced about eight annas. The Government's review of these operations is appended to this publication. This review also appears in the Press. Unfortunately the public does not seem to be keen on purchasing this publication, its interest rarely going beyond a perfunctory perusal of the Press Review. Being an annual review, the activities of the Department are often lost sight of by the public. There seems to be an

imperative need to recount to the public the activities of the Department more often than once a year, say, at least every three months. An advertisement through a proper medium seems to be urgently called for in this regard.

2. *Recommendations for improved cultural, manurial and other practices.* Data on these aspects are accumulating with the Department as a result of investigations made year after year. Departmental leaflets, pamphlets and other priced bulletins contain a wealth of information in this regard. These are distributed to the public mainly through the agency of the Agricultural Demonstrators. Still there seems to be a feeling with the public that their distribution is not adequate. Moreover, as advertisers in commercial fields do, it appears necessary to write leaflets to flatter the reader into believing that he was badly in need of the agricultural improvement which is the subject matter of the publication and that the investigation is just the thing that the reader wanted badly. In this group of advertising matter, may be included all the recommendations of the Department such as preservation of cattle manure, prevention of soil erosion, control of pests, proper grading and marketing of produce etc.

3. *Stimulating internal consumption of agricultural produce.* The present war has created some very distressing situations in the internal economy of our country which is predominantly agricultural. Our erstwhile markets in Europe and other western countries for our produce, particularly for our oilseeds, cotton etc., have been cut off. The need for stimulating internal consumption of some of these products and their by-products in industry has become urgent. Here is a fertile field for propaganda activity. The agriculturists are too poor and ignorant to be vociferous enough to stimulate internal consumption. The Department may take up their cause and by proper advertising in this respect relieve the distress of the agriculturists at least to some extent.

4. *Agricultural planning.* While propaganda in respect of group (3) relates to the present and immediate future, perhaps the Department has on its anvil some kind of agricultural planning with a view to divert where possible the area under one crop to another crop which is already grown in the Province or to some new crops which could be grown. For instance, so far as existing waste lands are concerned, the Department is already advocating cashewnut cultivation in them. Further, the shortage of coconuts in India calls for the extension of cultivation of this crop wherever possible. Such recommendations need considerable advertisement.

5. *Sale of seeds, implements and books.* At present the sale of these articles is effected through the agency of the Agricultural Demonstrators. There has been very little advertising for many of these, and as such their existence is not known to a vast majority of the public. If it is felt that the total quantity of seeds multiplied at Government farms is inadequate to meet the demands for seeds from all over the Province, it may be necessary

for the Department to run seed farms. The hearty co-operation of some of our enlightened ryots is badly needed in this line. Effective advertising would help the Department a great deal.

Medium of Advertisement. There are several media through which advertisements may be issued and notice will be taken of the following:— (1) Newspapers, (2) Magazines, (3) Direct mail, (4) Radio, (5) Sign-boards, and (6) Films. The merits of each from the point of view of the Department are discussed below:—

(1) *Newspapers.* Since the purpose of advertisement to be issued by the Agricultural Department is intended not only to educate the general public as to what is happening in the Department but also to instruct such of the cultivators as are literate about the recommendations of the Department, newspaper may serve as a very good medium. This form of advertisement would reach the largest number of people. The five groups of advertisements mentioned earlier could well be fitted into newspapers. The advertisements may be crisp and short at the beginning. Press notes and leaflets may be issued later detailing some of the investigations of the Department. For instance, the following types of advertisement are useful.

YOUR WASTE LANDS SHOULD GIVE YOU PROFIT

Grow *CASHEWNUTS* and have a sure return

Seeds can be had from your Agricultural Demonstrator

YOU'LL LIKE IT

GROUNDNUTS for munching

A substantial food—Rich in proteins

Eat more GROUNDNUTS

It may be necessary to have not only these advertisements effectively displayed in an important position of the paper but to have more than two insertions for each.

2. *Magazines.* Magazines command a very limited circulation in our country and cater only to particular tastes. Except a few Indian language journals, the others have very limited scope as advertising media for our Department.

3. *Direct Mail.* By direct mail, letters, cards, folders, booklets, leaflets etc., are posted to selected individuals. A proper mailing list of enlightened people who are agriculturally inclined can be drawn up by the Department by taking stock of the enquiries from private parties received by the various offices of the Department. This mailing list may be classed into various groups according to the nature of the crop grown in each tract wherein each addressee resides or owns lands. Such a grouping would

enable the Department to select the literature that should go to each address. The flexibility and selectivity of direct mail advertising are unsurpassed by any other medium. This line of advertising deserves special notice as its appeal to the public is direct and effective. Although its chief drawback in the Department is its relatively high cost by way of postage yet such literature could be mailed to selected addresses.

4. *Radio.* The possibilities of using radio as an aid to advertising has gripped the imagination of many. But its limitations, particularly in our country, are several-fold, more particularly on account of the multiplicity of languages. Moreover the number of receiving sets in our Province is few, and therefore the number of radio listeners is negligible compared to the population of the Province. Studies conducted in western countries indicate that appeals made through the sense of hearing are more lasting and effective than appeals made through the visual sense. Nevertheless, in our country what is gained in quality by radio advertising is lost by the paucity of the number of people who receive the message. In this Department there seems to be an imperative need to think of numbers rather than quality. At present advertisements of the Department are relayed by means of music, drama, and dialogues, for about 15 minutes every day between 6 and 7 p. m. Despite present defects, radio propaganda is becoming increasingly effective and should be continued.

5. *Signboards.* It appears that showy signboards and posters are not being used in this Department in any extensive manner though a few posters exist and some are put up at exhibitions. The possibility of a very much larger use of posters deserves to be seriously considered. The advantages of poster advertising are severalfold. Signboards are mobile and can reach any place. They concentrate attention very easily by virtue of their position, size and perhaps striking colours. They should be as simple in design as they are sure of attention. Signboards can be put on roadsides, on railway platforms and in trains, while those on motor buses ensure novelty and attention. Signboards in such places as Sub-treasuries, Registration and Judicial Offices would attract considerable attention from a large number of people from villages.

6. *Films.* The role of films as a medium of advertising has been fully recognised in all countries. A carefully planned set of short films which can be thrown as interludes before the usual programmes will go a long way to ensure popularisation of the work of the Department.

The foregoing discussion would indicate that the Department could consider the feasibility of taking to some of the above media more extensively for advertisement purposes. From the point of view of effectiveness, it is perhaps correct to state that at present signboard advertising would come first followed by newspaper advertising and lastly direct mail, though the last mentioned would entail perhaps relatively more cost merely by way of postage. It seems desirable to chalk out an advertisement programme spread over three or more years and watch the results carefully.

Educate the young. The need for creating an agricultural bias even with school children has been realised by our educationists for quite a long time and in a few schools agriculture is included in the curriculum of studies. It is desirable that this principle is extended for the use of Departmental propaganda as well.

There are about 700 High Schools in the Province. Every year about eight to nine thousand pupils pass their S. S. L. C. or Matriculation. These young men are the citizens of tomorrow and there is no reason why Departmental propaganda should not start with these high school leaving pupils. The free supply of a handsome copy of the Bible or the Gita when one takes a degree of a University may be copied, and attractively bound copies of the *Villagers' Calendar** may be supplied to high school leaving pupils. The *Villagers' Calendar* would serve as a good advertisement with the boys' families as well. Perhaps this would result in future increased sales of the *Villagers' Calendar*.

In addition to the distribution of literature, it is necessary that agricultural exhibitions are held in High Schools also. The Demonstrators may deliver popular lectures on some topical subjects to the students. A programme of various subjects may be drawn up, and different subjects may be dealt with in different tracts. The subjects may be changed every year, and the results watched. Experiences of Demonstrators dealing with a particular subject may be pooled together after the close of the lectures, and the gist of the lectures perfected as much as possible before passing the subjects on to the next demonstrator. This may be a new experiment and the results require to be watched after execution.

Financial considerations. The following estimate with slight modifications may be adopted as probable expenditure.

Expenditure per year.	Rs.
Preparation and printing posters and erection of signboards ...	10,000
Newspaper advertising	3,000
Cost of <i>Villagers' Calendar</i> for distribution to pupils ...	750
Cost of printing folders, new literature etc. ...	750
Other miscellaneous charges	500
Rs. ...	15,000

At first sight the sum of Rs. 15,000 provided for an advertisement programme may appear fabulous. In fact it works out only to about 0.7 per cent of the total expenditure of the Department. It is estimated that on the propaganda side the Department incurs not less than 4 lakhs of rupees and perhaps much more, and the estimated advertisement charges would amount to less than 4 per cent of this sum.

It may be asked whether success for this advertising programme is assured particularly when the percentage of literacy in our country is so low. The Department appears to have benefitted the ryots by the distribution of leaflets in spite of the large percentage of illiteracy in our country.

* A publication of the Madras Agricultural Department, priced one anna.

The advertisements envisaged in the foregoing pages merely make the appeal to ryots more intensive and extensive, and is to be followed up by the increased use of leaflets and press notes.

What other Government and quasi Government departments do. It does not also appear that the advertisement programme chalked out above is novel or revolutionary. There are a number of other Departments (particularly under the Government of India) which are utilizing advertisements to aid Departmental activity. The products of the Kerala Soap Institute, Calicut are well advertised. The Posts and Telegraph Department advertises its services with remarkable efficiency. The Imperial Council of Agricultural Research issues a number of posters and folders for advertising its publications. The Imperial Bureau of Plant Genetics in England has also issued a number of posters and mimeographed bulletins advertising its publications. *Indian Information* published by the Government of India is another example of how journalism has been harnessed for purposes of Departmental propaganda. Its flashing headlines and attractive summaries are an object lesson for Government advertisers. The Broadcasting Stations at Madras and Trichinopoly give a summary of a week's programme ahead of time through the medium of the newspapers.

A Central Agency for issuing popular publications and compiling advertisements. Departmental leaflets are intended as media for conveying information about particular recommendations made by the Department. Their prime object is to instigate cultivators to follow the recommendations made in the leaflets. The message contained in the leaflets should be couched in simple language, and end with a definite plea asking the reader to do a particular thing. Headlines in the leaflet should be catchy and the entire message should retain the reader's attention.

The present day manner of editing newspapers reflects the tastes of the public. Flashing headlines summarising news and reports are the order of the day. The very first sentence or paragraph of the news usually summarises the gist of the news. The compilation of such headlines and summaries no doubt requires some skill and special training. Similarly compilation of advertisements has become a special science. Separate technique for editing effective advertisements has been evolved. The Department has to take note of these facts also before launching an advertisement programme.

The practice at present obtaining in the Department seems to be that the author of every investigation writes his own leaflets. This appears to have resulted in numerous leaflets, each having a differing degree of appeal to the public proportionately to the skill of the author in writing popular leaflets. If the leaflets are to be effective, it appears necessary that the scientist should combine in him the qualities of the journalist as well. It is for consideration whether the Department cannot have a small trained Central Agency for editing popular literature and posters with the

material furnished by the investigating officer. Commercial concerns always seek the help of special advertising agencies for writing their advertisements. This would relieve pressure on the time of the scientist. After editing by the Central Agency, the draft of the popular publication or advertisement may be sent back to the author for approval before releasing it to the Press.

Co-operative Marketing of Sathugudi Oranges.

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The production of Sathugudi oranges in South India is at present concentrated in parts of Cuddapah, Chittoor and North Arcot Districts. But nowhere has it attained such a great commercial importance as in Rajampet taluk of Cuddapah District, particularly in and around Kodur town. It has been estimated that out of a total area of about 13,000 acres under 'tight jacket' orange, about 4,000 acres are spread out in a small valley in Rajampet taluk bounded by the Velikonda hills on the East and South and Seshachalam hills on the North and West. This tract is favoured by a fertile soil of considerable depth and good texture, a plentiful supply of sub-soil water suitable for irrigation, freedom from cyclonic winds and proximity to markets, factors eminently suitable for making this valley so renowned as the leading orange belt of South India.

The estimated production of oranges in this tract is at present of the order of 50,000 railway maunds, of which well over 45,000 maunds are believed to be exported annually outside the district, primarily to Madras city. This production represents the crop of only about 40 per cent of the planted area, as the rest of the orchards are yet young and in a non-bearing stage. With the present trend for rapid extension of orange plantings and the consequent increase in the bulk of marketable oranges from such new plantations in the near future, the problem of profitable disposal of the crop is bound to assume very great importance. Already there are complaints that the price of oranges is showing an abnormal tendency towards deterioration, so much so that the fruit is being quoted during the peak season in retail market at Madras at about Rs. 2 per hundred as compared to Rs. 4 to 5 during the corresponding season about three years ago. To attribute this alarming fall in price to over-production will be a travesty of facts, for the Presidency is not only a big importer of 'Santra' oranges from Coorg and Nagpur, but is also suffering from an under-supply of *Sathugudi* or allied type of 'tight jacket' oranges in most of the mufussal markets and almost all towns other than Madras. The haphazard method of distribution and defective system of lease of orchards and of marketing of fruits are believed to contribute mainly to the prevailing slump. Such features serve only to accentuate the ills and hasten the ruinous condition of the orange industry as the younger plantations continue to add increasing quantities of saleable produce every year.